

Diabetic burn patients have longer hospitalizations and more infections, complications, and procedures, than non-diabetic burn patients.

*Many injuries happen in **predictable, preventable** ways.*

Regularly examine feet for burns, sores, bruises, and infections. Be mindful of water and surface temperatures to prevent burns.

Burn Prevention and Diabetic Neuropathy

- Diabetic neuropathy is a nerve disorder caused by diabetes.
- Approximately 60% of people with diabetes suffer from some form of neuropathy.
- Peripheral neuropathy is the most common type of neuropathy. It damages the nerves of the limbs, especially the feet.
- Common symptoms of this kind of neuropathy are:
 - Numbness or insensitivity to pain or temperature;
 - Tingling, burning, or prickling;
 - Sharp pains or cramps;
 - Extreme sensitivity to touch, even light touch;
 - Loss of balance and coordination.
- Diabetic neuropathy may decrease sensitivity to pain and temperature, increasing the risk of burn injuries.
- Most burn injuries, where diabetic neuropathy was a contributing factor, were due to:
 - Warming feet near a heating device or fireplace, or on a heating pad/blanket;
 - Soaking or putting feet into water that was too hot.
- Some patients left their feet in hot water or near heat sources for several hours because they could not feel the burn occurring.
- Prevention and early detection is vital to the treatment of peripheral neuropathy and subsequent complications.
- Because of the loss of sensation caused by neuropathy, burns or injuries to the feet may go unnoticed and may become ulcerated.
- While the burned area of the body may be small, complications can arise and lead to subsequent amputation.

Prevention

- Carefully examine your feet and toes daily for any burns, sores, bruises, or infections.
- Set your home water heater's temperature to no higher than 120°F.
- Test the water temperature with your elbow/forearm before stepping in a bath.
- Wash your feet daily, using warm (not hot) water and a mild soap. Dry your feet carefully with a soft towel, especially between the toes.
- Avoid using heating pads or hot water bottles. Wear socks if your feet are cold or ask your physician about other methods to improve circulation.
- To avoid friction burns, wear shoes that fit your feet well and allow your toes to move. Break in new shoes gradually, wearing them for only an hour at a time at first. Wear thick, soft socks and avoid slippery stockings, mended stockings, or stockings with seams.
- Avoid walking barefoot, especially on hot sand or hot pavement.
- Ask your physician to check your feet at every visit, and call your physician if you notice that a burn or sore is not healing well.

Internet Resources

- <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/neuropathies/>
- <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/neuropathy>

Live Injury-Free!